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PASS EPA AND HUD OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

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TAGS: SENV, OECD
SUBJECT: TOXIC CHEMICALS AND OECD ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE 21ST SESSION, NOV.30-DEC.2, 1977

BEGIN SUMMARY: TOXIC CHEMICALS PROVIDED THE PRINCIPAL
FOCUS OF THE OECD ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING. ALL
PARTICIPANTS AGREED ON IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION IN VIEW OF MASSIVE TRADE IN CHEMICALS,
BUT UNCERTAIN AS TO APPROPRIATE MECHANISM. NO ONE
QUESTIONED DESIRABILITY OF POLICY LEVEL MEETING
PLANNED BY SWEDEN FOR NEXT APRIL, ALTHOUGH SOME OF
POTENTIALLY EXCLUDED COUNTRIES SHOWED SENSITIVITY.
COMMITTEE ENDORSED WORK OF CHEMICALS GROUP, INCLUDING
PROPOSAL FOR SIX TECHNICAL WORKING PARTIES, AGREED TO
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DIVERT SECRETARIAT RESOURCES IF NECESSARY FROM OTHER
AREAS TO CHEMICALS WORK, PREPARED TO CONSIDER NEXT
APRIL WHAT ROLE OECD MIGHT PLAY IN OVERALL INTERNA-
TIONAL COOPERATION.

IN U.S. HOSTED LUNCHEON FOR VISITING EPA
OFFICIAL, INFORMAL CONSENSUS REACHED AMONG PARTICIPANTS
FROM NINE PRINCIPAL CHEMICALS PRODUCERS THAT APRIL
MEETING IN STOCKHOLM DESIRABLE, THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE
OECD-SPONSORED, BUT THAT OECD SHOULD PLAY IMPORTANT

FUTURE ROLE.

IN OTHER ACTIVITIES, COMMITTEE AGREED ON RECOMMENDATIONS ON BEVERAGE CONTAINERS AND WATER MANAGEMENT POLICIES; AGREED TO RETAIN FOCUS IN 1979 PROGRAM ON PRIORITY AREAS OF ENERGY-ENVIRONMENT, CHEMICALS, TRANSBOUNDARY POLLUTION AND URBAN AREAS; DECIDED TO HOLD A MEETING AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL IN EARLY 1979; AND ADOPTED U.S. PROPOSALS ON REGULARIZATION OF ROLES OF COMMITTEE'S SUBSIDIARY BODIES AND SIMPLIFIED PAPER WORK. END SUMMARY.

1. TOXIC CHEMICALS:

THE FIRST SUBSTANTIVE ITEM ON THE COMMITTEE'S AGENDA WAS "THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE OECD IN THE FIELD OF CHEMICALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT". THE FIRST DAY'S DISCUSSION FOCUSSED ON TWO QUESTIONS: IS TOXIC CHEMICALS AN ISSUE CALLING FOR URGENT ACTION INTERNATIONALLY? IT WAS AGREED TO RETURN TO THE ISSUE ON THE FINAL DAY FOR A MORE DETAILED DISCUSSION OF INSTITUTIONAL AND RESOURCE ISSUES.

ALL DELEGATIONS EMPHATICALLY AGREED THAT THE TOXICS UNCLASSIFIED

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ISSUE IS A VERY IMPORTANT AND URGENT ONE. ALL ALSO FELT THAT THE OECD HAD A SIGNIFICANT ROLE TO PLAY, AND SEVERAL PRAISED IT FOR THE WORK IT HAD ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED AND RECENT INITIATIVES. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE WAS NO CONSENSUS AND NO DETAILED DISCUSSION ON HOW TO SORT THINGS OUT INTERNATIONALLY. THE FINNS STRUCK A RESPONSIVE CHORD WHEN THEY ARGUED THAT THE ISSUES WERE GLOBAL AND ACTIVITIES SHOULD NOT BE CONFINED TO THE OECD. DR. LONGREN (DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE SWEDISH NATIONAL PRODUCTS CONTROL BOARD, AND EX-CHAIRMAN OF THE OECD CHEMICALS GROUP) GAVE A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF SWEDISH THINKING ABOUT THE DESIRABILITY OF HOSTING AN INTERNATIONAL MEETING TO DISCUSS POLICY ISSUES RELATED TO TOXIC CHEMICALS. THE IDEA WAS RECEIVED POSITIVELY BY SEVERAL DELEGATIONS, WITH NONE SPEAKING AGAINST IT.

ALICE POPKIN, EPA ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES, VISITED PARIS SEPARATELY FROM COMMITTEE MEETING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PRESENCE OF SEVERAL KEY FIGURES. MISSION HOSTED LUNCHEON FOR HER AND USDEL LEADER GRANT TO TALK INFORMALLY WITH DELEGATES FROM PRINCIPAL CHEMICAL PRODUCING COUNTRIES. GERMANY, FRANCE, UK, JAPAN, NETHERLANDS, NORWAY, AND SWITZERLAND REPRESENTED, PLUS LONGREN WHO IS CHARGED BY HIS GOVERNMENT WITH DEVELOPING PROPOSED MEETING IN APRIL. LYKKE OF NORWAY WAS ABSENT, BUT PAULSON

ATTENDED FOR NORWAY.

LONGREN EXPLAINED PROPOSED MEETING AS OPPORTUNITY FOR KEY POLICY MAKERS AT NATIONAL LEVEL (NOT NECESSARILY MINISTERIAL) TO HAVE INFORMAL EXCHANGE CONCERNING ELEMENTS WHICH SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN CHEMICALS CONTROL, NATURE OF NATIONAL LEGISLATION DESIRABLE, AND MECHANISMS FOR FURTHER INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION. PERHAPS 12-14 COUNTRIES
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WOULD BE INVITED, PLUS OBSERVERS FROM OECD, EC, AND PERHAPS OTHER INTERESTED INTERNATIONAL BODIES. SWEDEN WOULD DEVELOP PROPOSED AGENDA IN CO-OPERATION WITH U.S. NO NATIONAL COMMITMENTS ANTICIPATED IN OR RESULTING FROM MEETING.

LUNCHEON PARTICIPANTS AGREED ON DESIRABILITY OF MEETING AND THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE HELD UNDER OECD AUSPICES, ALTHOUGH OECD OFFERS ADVANTAGES AS GOOD MECHANISM FOR ONGOING WORK. EARLIER, ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE BUREAU HAD AGREED ON NEED TO DEVELOP EXPLICIT PROPOSALS AS TO OECD ROLE FOR CONSIDERATION BY OECD COUNCIL MEETING AT FOREIGN/FINANCE MINISTER LEVEL ANTICIPATED IN MAY/JUNE 1978. NEXT ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING IS SCHEDULED BETWEEN PROPOSED STOCKHOLM MEETING AND 1978 MINISTERIAL MEETING TO PERMIT IT TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE. ONLY FRANCE AND SWITZERLAND EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS AS TO PROPOSAL FOR STOCKHOLM MEETING AS EARLY AS APRIL. SEVERAL EXPRESSED RELIEF THAT MEETING NOT PROPOSED AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL. IMPORTANCE OF COOPERATION EMPHASIZED AT LUNCHEON AND IN ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE SESSIONS.

IN THE FRIDAY CONTINUATION OF THE CHEMICALS DISCUSSION, THERE WAS A SHARPER FOCUS ON INSTITUTIONAL AND RESOURCE ISSUES. THE SECRETARIAT DESCRIBED THE RATHER SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES IT FELT WOULD BE NEEDED TO SUPPORT THE EXPANDED WORK DURING 1978, PRINCIPALLY THE SIX NEW WORKING PARTIES OF THE CHEMICALS GROUP (ANNEX I TO ENV (77)35). THE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY SUPPORTED THE CREATION OF THE WORKING PARTIES, BUT SEVERAL COUNTRIES EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE IMPLICATIONS OF TAKING RESOURCES AWAY FROM OTHER
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ONGOING ACTIVITIES. THE DUTCH ARGUED THAT SINCE THE CHEMICALS WORK IS SO IMPORTANT AND BROAD IN NATURE, ADDITIONAL RESOURCES SHOULD COME FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE OECD. JAPAN LED SEVERAL DELEGATIONS IN URGING

THAT THE WORK OF THE SIX NEW WORKING PARTIES BE PRIORITIZED, NOTING THAT SOME OF IT SEEMS TO OVERLAP WITH ACTIVITIES IN OTHER INSTITUTIONS (E.G. WHO). IN JAPAN'S VIEW, THE CLEAR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY ISSUE IS ENVIRONMENTAL TOXICITY. SWITZERLAND AGREED. FINLAND AND OTHERS AGAIN PRESSED THE NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AMONG INSTITUTIONS AND RATIONALIZATION OF EFFORT.

IN THE END, THE CONSENSUS WAS THAT THE SECRETARIAT WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO SHIFT SOME RESOURCES WITHIN ITS 1978 PROGRAM TO ADDRESS THE SHORT-TERM CHEMICALS NEEDS, BUT THE DIRECTOR WAS URGED TO MINIMIZE THIS AND SEEK MAXIMUM AID FROM INTERESTED COUNTRIES.

THE SECRETARIAT WILL PREPARE PAPER FOR THE NEXT MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE WHICH WILL DISCUSS THE VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES AND DESCRIBE IN DETAIL THE MANNER IN WHICH ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ARE BEING MUSTERED FOR THE 1978 WORK OF THE CHEMICALS GROUP.

IN RESPONSE TO A SERIES OF DETAILED QUESTIONS, DR. LONGREN DISCUSSED FURTHER THE PROPOSED STOCKHOLM CONFERENCE. HE SAID THAT "THE DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN IN PRINCIPLE" TO HOLD THE CONFERENCE, BUT THAT CONSIDERATION OF DETAILS HAD INTENTIONALLY BEEN LEFT UNTIL AFTER THE DISCUSSION AT THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE. THE SECOND WEEK OF APRIL IS THE CURRENT TARGET. HE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING AN INFORMAL CONFERENCE, AND USED THIS AS THE REASON WHY ONLY A LIMITED NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WOULD BE INVITED. (AUSTRIA AND ITALY HAD EARLIER URGED THAT ALL OECD UNCLASSIFIED

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COUNTRIES BE INVITED; THE EC HAD ASKED THAT IT BE INVITED).

2. 1979 PROGRAM.

THERE WAS A VERY USEFUL DISCUSSION OF THE OUTLINES OF THE 1979 PROGRAM. AT U.S. PROMPTING, THE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY AGREED TO CONTINUE TO FOCUS ITS ACTIVITIES ON THE FOUR AGREED PRIORITY AREAS OF ENERGY-ENVIRONMENT, CHEMICALS, TRANSFRONTIER POLLUTION, AND URBAN ISSUES. A COROLLARY WAS AGREEMENT THAT NO MAJOR NEW AREAS WOULD BE TACKLED DURING 1979 (ALTHOUGH IT WAS LATER AGREED THAT THE EARLY 1979 ENVIRONMENT MINISTERIAL SHOULD FOCUS ON "FORWARD-LOOKING" ISSUES. (SEE BELOW). CHEMICALS CLEARLY CAME OUT AS THE FIRST AMONG EQUALS IN THE PRIORITIES, AND SEVERAL NEW PROJECTS DEALING WITH VARIOUS CHEMICALS ISSUES ARE IN THE HOPPER. AT THE SAME TIME, SEVERAL COUNTRIES URGED THAT THE COMMITTEE MAINTAIN BALANCE IN ITS PROGRAM. THE U.S.

ALSO URGED THAT - IN VIEW OF THE RESOURCE PINCH - THE COMMITTEE NOT CONSIDER ALL EXISTING PROJECTS AS SACROSANCT, THAT SOME MIGHT BE RIPE FOR PARING. OTHERS PICKED UP THIS THEME AND SEVERAL ONGOING ACTIVITIES WERE MENTIONED AS CANDIDATES FOR REDUCTION-

MOST NOTABLY THE TRANSFRONTIER POLLUTION GROUP. (THE U.S. LATER EXPLICITLY SUPPORTED A REDUCION IN THIS AREA). LAST SEVERAL DELEGATIONS PLACED EMPHASIS ON ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES.

AS TO PROCEDURE, THE SECRETARIAT WILL SUBMIT A DRAFT 1979 PROGRAM TO PERMANENT DELEGATIONS IN JANUARY.

AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THEIR GOVERNMENTS, THE MISSIONS UNCLASSIFIED

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WILL MEET WITH THE SECRETARIAT TO WORK UP A REVISED DRAFT PROGRAM, WHICH WILL THEN BE CIRCULATED SEVERAL WEEKS IN ADVANCE OF THE COMMITTEE'S NEXT MEETING.

3. ORGANIZATION OF COMMITTEE'S SUBSIDIARY BODIES: IN FOLLOW-UP TO A U.S. INITIATIVE, THE QUESTION OF THE ROLE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMITTEE'S SUBSIDIARY BODIES RECEIVED A THOROUGH AIRING. THE SECRETARIAT ACCEPTED MOST OF THE SPECIFIC U.S. PROPOSALS (CR D 9, MAY 1977) AND THE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY AGREED, WITH MINOR VARIATIONS. A REVISED PAPER WAS PRODUCED BY THE SECRETARIAT, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE U.S., AND ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE AS A "STATEMENT OF ACCEPTED PRINCIPLES". AN ADDITIONAL SUCCESS WAS LOGGED WHEN THE SECRETARIAT ANNOUNCED THAT IT PLANNED TO FOLLOW FULLY THE NEW FORMAT FOR PROJECT DESCRIPTION WHICH THE U.S. ALSO TABLED AT THE MAY MEETING (CRD 10).

4. URBAN INITIATIVE: DR. SCIMEMI DESCRIBED THE BACKGROUND AND STATUS OF THE U.S.'S URBAN INITIATIVE, ADDING THAT A MORE DETAILED U.S. PAPER WAS EXPECTED BY THE END OF THE YEAR. THERE WAS UNCERTAINTY IN SOME DELEGATIONS CONCERNING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROPOSED AD HOC GROUP AND THE EXISTING URBAN GROUP OF THE COMMITTEE, BUT U.S. EXPLANATIONS HOPEFULLY CLEARED UP THE MATTER. INTER ALIA, WE NOTED THAT THE AD HOC GROUP, IF APPROVED, WILL MERELY MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL. THEN THE ORGANIZATION WILL HAVE TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO. THE GENERAL THRUST OF THE U.S. INITIATIVE WAS POSITIVELY RECEIVED, BUT THE DUTCH STRONGLY URGED THAT ANY NEW INITIATIVES NOT COME AT THE EXPENSE OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE'S BUDGET, AND SEVERAL DELEGATIONS ASKED THAT THE COMMITTEE BE KEPT AU

COURANT ON FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS. ITALY AND FINLAND
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ASKED THAT ANY NEW "URBAN" ACTIVITIES INCLUDE RURAL
AS WELL AS URBAN SETTLEMENTS.

5. ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT:
AS FRAMEWORK FOR THE THREE SEPARATE ENERGY-ENVIRONMENT
TOPICS ON THE AGENDA, THE SECRETARIAT DESCRIBED THE
VARIOUS COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES BEING UNDERTAKEN OR
PLANNED WITH THE NEA AND IEA. ESPECIALLY WITH IEA,
RELATIONS SEEM TO BE PRODUCTIVE, AND WITH NEA CO-
OPERATION IS EVOLVING, ESPECIALLY IN RELATION TO
OCEAN DUMPING ISSUES. THE U.S. INTERVENED TO
CONGRATULATE THE SECRETARIAT ON GETTING WELL UNDER
WAY THE ACTIVITIES WHICH THE COMMITTEE DIRECTED BE
UNDERTAKEN IN MAY, AND STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF
SUCH WORK.

ON SPECIFICS, IT WAS AGREED TO DISCONTINUE THE RESI-
DUALS PROJECT AND DERESTRICT THE FEASIBILITY STUDY
REPORT. THERE WAS STRONG EMPHASIS PLACED ON THE
IMPORTANCE OF THE COMMITTEE DOING A CAREFUL JOB OF
REVIEWING AND COMMENTING ON THE POLVANI REPORT.
THE COMMITTEE PLANS TO TAKE UP THE MATTER FOR A
FINAL REVIEW AT ITS APRIL MEETING (WHICH COMES JUST
PRIOR TO THE NEA STEERING GROUP SESSION WHICH WILL
REVIEW THE POLVANI DOCUMENT). THE U.S. NOTED IN
RELATION TO THE OIL CARRIER STUDY THAT WE WOULD
PROBABLY WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE JANUARY WORKSHOP
AND THAT WE WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE APPARENTLY QUITE
NARROW FOCUS BEING GIVEN TO ASSESSMENTS OF ENVIRON-
MENTAL BENEFITS. ITALY AND CANADA SAID THAT THEY
MIGHT ALSO WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE JANUARY SESSION.
THE SECRETARIAT URGED THAT IT BE INFORMED ASAP
OF NAMES OF PARTICIPANTS.
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6. 1979 MINISTERIAL
THE COMMITTEE AGREED TO SEEK COUNCIL APPROVAL FOR AN
EARLY 1979 MINISTERIAL MEETING. (THE LAST ONE WAS IN
LATE 1974). DATE STILL NOT SETTLED. THERE WAS GENERAL
AGREEMENT THAT THE MINISTERS SHOULD CONSIDER ONE
FORWARD-LOOKING THEME (WHAT THE SECRETARIAT CALLS
"ANTICIPATORY ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES"), BUT A THEME
WAS NOT AGREED UPON. NEITHER WERE THE AREAS WHERE
LIKELY DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS MIGHT EVOLVE,
ALTHOUGH MANY FELT THAT CHEMICALS MIGHT PROVIDE A
FERTILE FIELD BY THEN.

7. SPRING FORUM:

THE DIRECTOR URGED, AND THE COMMITTEE AGREED, THAT IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE TO INCLUDE IN THE SPRING MEETING A "FORUM" OR "ROUNDTABLE" DISCUSSION (ALA THE CCMS PRACTICE). THERE WAS NO CONSENSUS ON A THEME, AND THE SECRETARIAT WILL CIRCULATE IN JANUARY SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR COUNTRIES' REVIEW AND COMMENT.

8. FLUOROCARBONS:

THE SECRETARIAT SAID THAT THE CHEMICALS GROUP FELT IT HAD COMPLETED ITS WORK, AND WANTED THE FINAL REPORT DERESTRICTED. THE U.S. URGED THAT THIS BE DONE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND THERE WAS NO OPPOSITION. WE ALSO EXPLAINED THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE ISSUE IN THE U.S., OUR CONTINUING VERY STRONG CONCERN, AND HOPE THAT THE LATE 1978 FOLLOW-UP REGULATORY MEETING WILL BE HELD AS PLANNED.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS:

AFTER MASSAGING BY DRAFTING GROUPS, THE RECOMMENDATIONS ON BEVERAGE CONTAINER REUSE AND RECYCLING AND WATER MANAGEMENT POLICIES WERE APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE FOR TRANSMITTAL TO THE COUNCIL. THE FORMER ENDED UNCLASSIFIED

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UP PRACTICALLY AS CONTAINED IN ENV(77)-29. THE WATER RECOMMENDATION (ENV (77)30) WAS AMENDED IN SEVERAL PLACES, AND THE U.S.'S MAIN CONCERNS WERE ADEQUATELY ACCOUNTED FOR. THE TRANSFRONTIER POLLUTION RECOMMENDATION (ENV (77)40) WAS NOT DISCUSSED SUBSTANTIVELY DUE TO VERY STRONG OPPOSITION FROM BELGIUM AND FRANCE. IT WAS FINALLY AGREED TO RETURN IT TO THE TFP GROUP.

THE PAPER ADVISING AGAINST FURTHER ATTEMPTS TO DEFINE CRITERIA FOR GRANTING ASSISTANCE TO NEW PLANTS WAS APPROVED WITHOUT DEBATE. THE EMPLOYMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT PAPER (ENV (77)34) WAS MUCH MORE CONTROVERSIAL, AND PRECIPITATED LIVELY DISCUSSION. IN PART THANKS TO SOME U.S. LOBBYING, THE COMMITTEE FINALLY AGREED TO PERMIT THE DOCUMENT'S DERESTRICTION - ALONG WITH THE PAPERS FROM THE SEMINAR - UNDER COVER OF A SECRETARIAT COVER NOTE EXPLAINING MORE IN DETAIL THE THRUST OF THE SEMINAR'S DISCUSSION AND THE LACK OF SOLID CONSENSUS ON SOME POINTS. SEVERAL DELEGATIONS SPOKE IN FAVOR OF COUNTRY REVIEWS. OTHERS SUPPORTED THE IDEA OF A MULTI-COUNTRY/SINGLE TOPIC REVIEW RATHER THAN A ONE COUNTRY/BROAD REVIEW. INTERESTINGLY, AUSTRALIA URGED CONSIDERATION OF A MULTI-COUNTRY REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN A FEDERAL SYSTEM. THE COMMITTEE'S NEXT MEETING WILL BE APRIL 24-26, 1978.

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